

A Message from Don Volger, Mayor of Pagosa Springs

March 17, 2020

Yesterday, as the Mayor of Pagosa Springs, I signed Resolution No. 2020-05, “declaring a local disaster emergency due to imminent danger and impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)”.

Medical professionals and disease experts agree that this virus spreads easily by touch, and progresses rapidly. Some victims don’t even realize they’ve been infected, but some become seriously ill and die. This disease can affect so many, so quickly, that our medical resources could be consumed in a brief span of time, resulting in less care for those with other problems. When “triage” decisions become necessary, the consequences can be deadly. We may be able to prevent the draining of resources, and “flatten the (epidemiological) curve” by taking common sense precautions that, unfortunately, have other significantly negative side-effects, primarily economic.

This is a different type of disease because of the effects it has had, and will have, on the global and local economy. People are not just inconvenienced. Many are confused and facing challenging financial hardships. The number of individuals and families forced to deal with those additional burdens will increase. But death and loss, will most likely increase before it’s over. If I must choose between saving the lives of others and temporary financial gain, I choose life. Which do you choose?

The coronavirus will not be fatal for the majority who contract it, but may take the physical life of many who are most vulnerable. Many of those deaths can be prevented by making responsible and prudent decisions. We can all be responsible and prudent about social distancing, avoiding unnecessary contact, frequently washing hands, covering our mouths when we cough or sneeze, and being respectful to others who choose not to have physical contact during this challenging time. I’m a hugger and that’s hard for me, but I will avoid offending others by subjecting them to unwanted contact. I will support them. I can love and encourage others, without physical touch, by being understanding and helping as needs arise.

I believe everything happens for a reason, even those life events which pierce us with pain, suffering, and loss. I believe in God and the importance of trusting Him always, especially in difficult times. I pray. I believe that there are lessons to be learned from all the circumstances of life. I don’t believe I’m the Mayor, at this time, by coincidence. There is a reason. I’m expected to lead.

Each one of us must decide how we will maintain hope when things look chaotic and dark, and how to prepare for difficult, and hopefully unlikely possibilities, like a lengthy quarantine? We need to be sharing those helpful and creative ideas with each other. Here is what I am doing.

I’ll do what I can to fulfill my responsibilities and assume my authority. I will continue to love and support others regardless of their level of fear and anxiety. I’ll work with others, and listen to those who know much more than me. I will act prudently and wisely to the best of my ability, with my God’s guidance and grace. I’ll not ask others to believe what I believe, but will be there for them as often as possible. I will pray the “Serenity Prayer”:

“God, grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change, the COURAGE to change those things I can, and the WISDOM to know the difference.”

I hope you will follow my lead.

I understand and accept the fact that you may not believe in God or prayer. But please spend some time directing your thoughts, meditations, and/or prayers seeking ways you can help and encourage our loved ones, family, friends, and neighbors during this difficult time. As we come together in unity, for a cause that's “bigger than us”, we'll be stronger. We can't allow fear to guide our decisions. We'll get through this and be better on the other side if we support one another, work together, and make wise decisions. I believe it with all my heart because I believe in God and the amazing people in our community. God bless and protect you and your loved ones.